

CRISPY PORK BELLY BITES WITH SWEET POTATO PUREE

by *Georganne Brennan*

Not long ago at a small auberge, near the famed olive groves of Les Baux in Provence, I was served pork belly with sweet potato puree and savory quince. The day, while still warm enough to eat outside, had the promise of fall on the air. The dish—elevated comfort food—seemed a harbinger of the coming season. Now, it's too cold to eat outside, but this similar dish, served in front of a cozy fire, along with a glass of rich Corbières rouge Rozeta, seems made for winter nights.

SWEET POTATO PUREE

1½ pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch-thick slices
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
3 tablespoons heavy cream
2½ tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1½ teaspoons grated lemon zest
½ teaspoon sea salt

¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
¼ teaspoon Aleppo pepper

PORK BELLY BITES

1 pound skinless pork belly
½ teaspoon sea salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
¼ cup fresh sage leaves

Put sliced sweet potatoes in a large saucepan and cover with 2 inches of cold water. Place over medium-high heat and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium, partially cover the pan, and cook until potatoes are easily pierced with a knife, 20 to 25 minutes.

Remove to a colander and drain. Put sweet potatoes back in the hot pan, and add butter, cream, and olive oil. With an immersible blender, puree until smooth and creamy, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in lemon zest, salt, and peppers. Taste and adjust seasonings if desired. Cover the pan and set aside while you prepare the pork.

Cut the pork into ½- to 1-inch cubes. Season with salt and pepper. Over medium-high heat, heat a dry frying pan large enough to hold the cubes. When it is hot, add the cubes. Let them cook, undisturbed, for about 2 minutes, just until they begin to release their fat. Stir them, frying until crispy and golden brown, about 5 minutes. With a slotted spoon, remove them to a bowl. Add sage leaves to the hot oil, frying them until crisp, 1 or 2 minutes. Remove to a paper towel-lined plate.

If needed, reheat the sweet potato puree with a little more cream, stirring to prevent sticking.

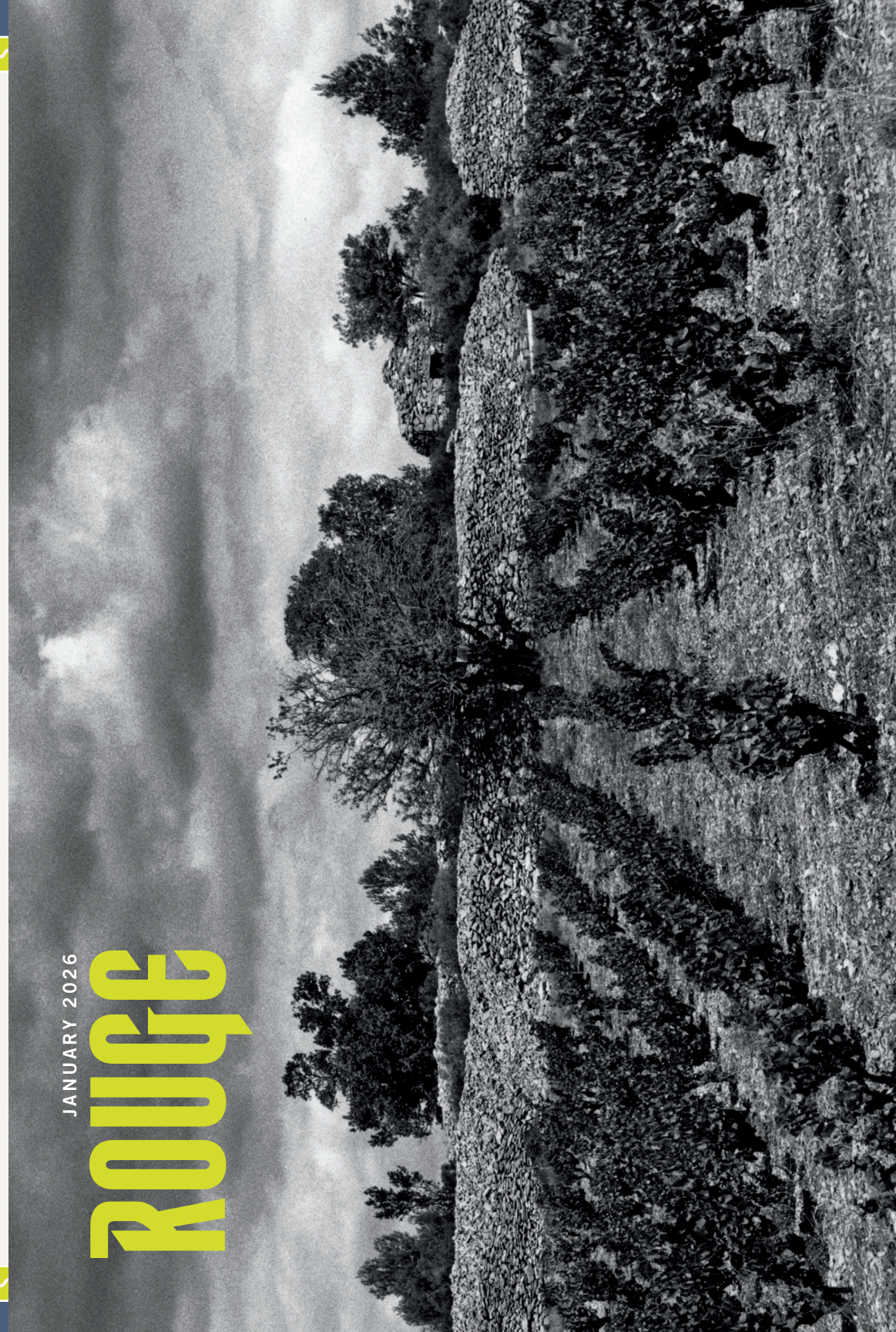
To serve, spoon the puree onto a rimmed platter. Surround the edges with the pork bites and scatter all with the crispy sage leaves. Serve immediately. *Serves 4*



The James Beard award-winning cookbook author Georganne Brennan is also the author of the best-selling food memoir *A Pig in Provence*. She continues to write about food and cooking from her longtime homes in Provence and in Northern California, where she co-owns an aperitif wine bar. You can find more of her recipes at www.georgannebrennan.com.

JANUARY 2026

ROUGE



2023 PAYS D'OC ROUGE
MAS CHAMPART







YOU WON'T FIND MUCH CABERNET FRANC planted in the south of France, but a few decades ago, the folks at Mas Champart planted a little bit as a curiosity more than anything else. When, a few years later, they tasted the fruit of this experiment—blending mostly Cab Franc with a splash of Syrah—it was such a success that Kermit wanted some for his clients back home. He didn't care that it couldn't carry the Saint-Chinian appellation that Mas Champart had put on the map; the wine was too good to pass up. As Cabernet Franc shows in the Loire, this is a highly expressive and terroir-driven grape variety. In this cuvée, the south's trademark herbs, earthy spice, and faint notes of tapenade come through along with a sunny succulence that speaks to its origins on the Languedoc's hot, arid slopes. —Tom Wolf



Pairs well with lamb stuffed with olives and capers, chicken liver pâté, and mushroom quiche.



\$22.00 PER BOTTLE \$237.60 PER CASE

					
2023 Pays d'Oc Rouge Mas Champart	95% Cabernet Franc, 5% Syrah	25-year-old vines, on average Marl, clay, limestone, trias sandstone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62°F Decant optional	Herbs, stones, tapenade Succulent, savory, earthy	Drink now
2022 Corbières Rouge “Rozeta” Maxime Magnon	40% Carignan, 30% Grenache, 30% Cinsault	50- to 60-year-old vines Limestone, schist	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62°F Decant optional	Dark fruit, spice, pomegranate Vibrant, lifted, pure	Drink now through 2032

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2022 CORBIÈRES ROUGE “ROZETA”
MAXIME MAGNON

ALUMINARY OF FRENCH WINE, Maxime Magnon is among the rare vigneronns in each generation who redefine what's possible for a given region. Having relocated to Corbières in 2002, he was blown away by its trove of old vines, many of them abandoned due to their dwindling yields. But yields weren't Maxime's concern—quality was, so he embraced these old vines and began to treat them with the care they deserved. Even though he farms a challenging terrain of schist and limestone, with very little topsoil, he still boosts it as much as he can, like his mentor Didier Barral in nearby Faugères, by letting livestock roam the vines in the winter to fertilize the soils. Very few of his peers pamper their vines like Maxime does. In the cellar, he applies some of the seminal techniques he picked up while training in the Beaujolais—whole-cluster fermentation and low sulfur—and applies them to his

Carignan, Grenache, and Cinsault, giving his Corbières purity and lift you rarely find in the Languedoc. This is, without a doubt, one of the South's benchmark reds. —Tom Wolf

\$52.00 PER BOTTLE
\$561.60 PER CASE



LEFT Maxime Magnon. © Gail Skoff
COVER Saint-Chinian. © Gail Skoff